

III. Benefits of BYOD

The use of computer or any other device does not guarantee that the learner is going to succeed. The outcome is unpredictable the same way that having books in the library won't guarantee that the learner will learn. The books once are printed cannot be change but the internet is a world wide web of knowledge that gets updated by the second. The common denominator is the learner who has to engage in his own learning.

Who would benefit?

The obvious answer is all learners. In education to see results takes time, it is not an overnight thing. There be computers, laptops, iPads or tablets, cellular phones or any device allows the user to access, through the internet, a world of information. This generation of student is the “digital learners” and we are the rest. We have been “force” to learn technology in a fear of being left behind. They are not learning the same way we have learned, they are on the move and on a 24/7 schedule, they are blended learners. This is a mobile generation using mobile equipment and learning in their mobile way. That makes us, the educators, to keep up with them. Let assure you that devices does not need to connect all the time to the internet to be useful. It is easy to have a downloaded material to the device for future use to keep up moving. It takes cognitive knowledge to go from one device to another. Let look at the most use, in my opinion, software; MSWord. This software allows the user to type, make grammar corrections, re-arrange the text, and modifies it, copy, paste, print, and much more. It makes writing easier. The learner and teacher can create activities to interact with another class next door or around the world. These activities can be synchronous or asynchronous which increase opportunities for interaction with others.

English Language Learners

Learners whose English is their second language (L2) can easily connect with others learners whose English is their first (L1) language and improve his language skills (Warschauer & Meskill). Güliz Turgut (2012) mentions that L2 students can use laptops for five purposes in the classroom: developing and practicing language skills, differentiating reading levels, write essays, preparation and presentation of projects, and completing assignments. While they use the laptops for those purposes they are also using different software. I know that some of those task can be performed using some tablets. Some issues were raise when using laptops to teach L2 students; the lack of software and updates, reliable connectivity and updated laptops (Turgut, 2012). Having connectivity problems can affect any device. The WiFi connection is mainly used but its service has to be reliable. One problem that worth to be mentioned is that all programs are written in English.

Special needs learners

Learners who have a physical disability can use any of the technological devices and participate in game and other fun activities. Learners who have comprehension problems can review the class material over and over with their own devices. Students with learning disabilities can benefits from assistive technology (Edyburn, 2006). The use of technology devices are needed to assist students with learning disabilities in completing the required task. For students who cannot read their textbooks they can benefit of using text to speech programs. There are softwares that types what the students say helping them in their writings (Edyburn, 2006).

Cost benefits

BYOD is based in the ability to connect to the Internet, mainly using WiFi. The internet service must be present for students and teachers to connect. The National Infrastructure Initiative (NIII) created in 1993, had a goal of extending the universal service concept. It will provide poor schools access to telecommunication services. In 1996 the U.S. Congress approved the Telecommunication Act (E-Rate) to provide discounted services to poor districts. It is limited to schools and libraries that cannot provide resources for their community organizations (Solomon, Allen & Resta, 2003). The E-rate uses the school socioeconomic status system to measure their financial support. For example if the school had 70% of students in reduced lunch, E-Rate would provide 70% of the connection cost. Other non-profit organizations like CTCNet (More, 2013) have come together to provide access to technology.

CTCNet's Mission

CTCNet believes that all people, regardless of race, religion or social status should have equal rights and access to technology and the ability to learn the skills to use it. It was founded by the Playing to Win foundation. They understood even in the late 90's that technology was moving fast. It was going to become a staple to everyday life and that people who did not have the ability or advantage of using and learning these technologies would sooner or later get left behind in a sea of ever-advancing technologies.

Having E-Rate combined with CTCNet makes Internet access to less affluent schools districts closing an economic gap to have access to telecommunication. The problem is not solved here. Take more that connectivity to make the connection, now we need the devices and updated software. Also, the schools districts need to have the leadership and teachers' preparedness to deal with technology devices.

Sarah Bernard (2011) raises a question on her article Crossing the Digital Divide: Bridges and Barriers to Digital Inclusion on how to define access when the prices on personal computers are dropping. She site Pew Internet & American Life Project report saying that 95% of Americans between the ages of 18 to 29 use internet.

A survey conducted by the Advanced Placement (AP) and the National Writing Project (NWP) finds that digital technology help middle and high schools students. The report also found some remarkable difference between affluent and poor schools (Purcell, Heaps, Buchanan & Friedrich).

There are the PEW report findings:

- *92% of the interviewed teachers say that internet has a “major impact” in their ability to access content, resources, and materials for their searching*
- *69% say the internet has a “major impact” on their ability to share ideas with other teachers*
- *67% say the internet has a “major” impact on their ability to interact with parents*
- *57% say has such an impact enabling their interaction with students*
- *At the same time 75% of AP and NWP teachers say the internet and other digital tools added new demand for their lives. 41% report that major impact by demand by enabling more interaction with the students.*

The survey finds that digital tools are widely used in classrooms and assignments; however, it also indicates that teachers of the lowest income students face more challenges in bringing these tools to their classrooms:

- *52% of teachers of upper and upper-middle income students say their students use cell phones to look up information in class, compared with 35% of teachers of the lowest income students*

- *Just 15% of AP and NWP teachers whose students are from upper income households say their school is “behind the curve” in effectively using digital tools in the learning process; 39% who teach students from low income households describe their school as “behind the curve”*
- *70% of teachers of the highest income students say their school does a “good job” providing the resources needed to bring digital tools into the classroom; the same is true of 50% of teachers working in low income areas*
- *Teachers of the lowest income students are more than twice as likely as teachers of the highest income students (56% v. 21%) to say that students’ lack of access to digital technologies is a “major challenge” to incorporating more digital tools into their teaching*

A reasonable way to close the gap among the poor and affluent students is by the school to provide devices to be share in classrooms. Students that do not have internet connection at home can visit the public library or stay after hours in school to complete their work. Noting that over 92% of college students use the internet, future college students need to be proficient in the use of the internet devices. BYOD is what college students are using in colleges because they do not issue them. K12 students can benefit the use of BYOD to conduct researches and produce class work preparing them for the future.

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